

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 43

By Herron

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint committee to study the various societal problems caused by alcohol abuse and addiction.

WHEREAS, the societal problems associated with alcohol abuse and addiction are ever increasing and have, in fact, reached epidemic proportions; and

WHEREAS, underage drinking is one of the most disturbing and perplexing of these societal problems; and

WHEREAS, although the high incidence of drinking among high school students is indeed alarming and unacceptable, nowhere is alcohol abuse by young people more glaringly apparent than on the college campuses of this state and nation; and

WHEREAS, surveys consistently show that just under half of all college students drink excessively, a proportion that hasn't declined despite a decade of well-meaning efforts and societal pressure to reduce the number of college students who participate in binge drinking on either a frequent or occasional basis; and

WHEREAS, in order to combat the escalating problems of underage drinking, binge drinking and other forms of alcohol abuse on their campuses, some colleges and universities

are participating in national programs to combat alcohol abuse; one such program is A Matter of Degree, which endeavors to change campus cultures to reduce the incidence of drinking; and

WHEREAS, other schools are using a "social norms" approach, spreading the message to students that their peers drink less than they think, in an attempt to make alcohol abuse less socially acceptable; and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Education has begun highlighting innovative anti-drinking practices at colleges and universities, and high school guidance offices now have access to a list of model colleges and universities in the arena of combating alcohol abuse; and

WHEREAS, people who drive motor vehicles under the influence of alcohol exact a great toll on our society, both in terms of human life and overall productivity; and

WHEREAS, the appalling stories of people killed or maimed in automobile accidents involving drunk drivers are all too numerous, and the lost wages, property destruction and spiraling insurance rates that are a direct product of drunk driving deprive its victims of their normal quality of life and reduce the productivity of our society as a whole; and

WHEREAS, it is time to review Tennessee's criminal penalties for driving under the influence of an intoxicant to determine if such penalties should be enhanced in order to act as a greater deterrent to drunk driving; and

WHEREAS, for some thirty years, the problems associated with addiction to alcohol and/or other drugs have been addressed by federal and state funds devoted to resolution of the abuse of these mind- and mood-altering substances; and

WHEREAS, the treatment/prevention of drug and alcohol addiction has been addressed by various strategies; however, the lack of coordinated statewide efforts presents a major obstacle to dealing with the problems created by drug and alcohol abuse; and

WHEREAS, it is imperative that this General Assembly carefully examine the societal problems caused by alcohol abuse and addiction, both in human and monetary terms, and propose viable solutions thereto; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That there is hereby created a special joint committee to study the various societal problems caused by alcohol abuse and addiction, including but not limited to, underage drinking, binge drinking and other forms of alcohol abuse by college students, driving under the influence of alcohol and criminal penalties thereof and the delivery of alcohol and drug abuse treatment services, including the clinical effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of such services.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the committee shall consist of three (3) members of the House of Representatives and three (3) members of the Senate, to be appointed by the respective speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall remain members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the General Assembly; and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice-chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the special joint committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation or interim reports, to the One Hundred Second General Assembly no later than February 1, 2002, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.